1336

COMIC SHOP NEWS

SON OF MERLIN

We're Off to Meet the Wizard

There are names intrinsically associated with science: Einstein... Curie... Mendel... Merlin...

Wait a minute—*Merlin?*

That's right—or at least, it's right according to *Robert Place Napton,* writer of Top Cow's new series ***Son of Merlin.*** This new series focuses on a brilliant scientist who discovers a family secret that never showed up on ancestry.com!

"In this story, we catch up with some of the characters from the Arthurian mythos in present day and are introduced to their successors and proteges," Napton told ***CSN.*** "Merlin is the stuff of legend, but what if the legend was grounded in reality -- a reality we had yet to discover? That's the premise. Everyone knows the story of Merlin, Arthur, but in this series we reveal the truth behind the legend.

"We meet Merlin. *The* Merlin. And the titular character, his son, becomes our central focus. We learn and discover through his eyes. He takes us, the reader, along for the ride, and it's a very kinetic and interesting ride through an urban fantasy setting. This is not your dad's King Arthur adventure, so to speak."

Does the life of book's protagonist change once he discovers his lineage? "Yes!" Napton said. "His name is Simon Ambrose. He's a genius. He graduated at a young age from MIT and joined the faculty as an instructor. His emphasis is the study of energy. He's obsessed and consumed by notions of energy, so in that sense he's already dabbling in magic, but he doesn't know it yet, because magic is simply another form of energy, isn't it?

"Simon is very immersed in his work at MIT when the story opens. He's not one to spend a lot of time pondering about the fantastic—his world is very grounded in reality, so he has probably never considered 'magic' before discovering his lineage. He's very skeptical at first when this new world of magic starts to unveil itself. He's intrigued but ultimately his scientific mind dismisses it.

"But like any scientist, when he's faced with incontrovertible facts, he has no choice but to accept them as reality, so his perception of reality is shattered—as is his perception of himself. Yet it's all done with a light a touch. Simon is a classic introvert—he's shy and not entirely comfortable in his own skin, so these discoveries, while incredible, also create some funny moments. Snappy patter ensues when appropriate and that was a lot of fun."

So how *does* Simon discover his heritage? "A hot chick named Gwen delivers the good news. Worse ways one could find out, I suppose!... Simon is not the smoothest with the ladies, so there's some tension from the outset because this really beautiful woman he's never met is telling him this ridiculous story that he is in fact, the offspring of the historical Merlin. Needless to say, he has trouble wrapping his head around it—but circumstances unfold quickly that make it apparent that she's telling him the truth."

IN THIS DARKEST HOUR, LET LIGHT STREAM FORTH INTO THE MINDS OF ALL HUMANITY...
ELEMENTS OF EARTH, WIND, WATER AND FIRE, BE WITH US THIS NIGHT...
"LET YOUR MAGIC EMPOWER OUR RITE."

Merlin, a woman named Gwen—is it safe to assume that other members of the Arthurian saga will also make an appearance in the story? Just how Arthurian *is* ***Son of Merlin?*** "Along with Merlin, Morgana is central," Napton said. B"ut it's not the Morgana/Merlin dynamic we've come to expect. I'd like to think we've gone back to the beginning, so it's pretty Arthurian in that sense. Again, in the world of this story, the myth of King Arthur exists, just as it does in our world—but then Simon and others meet the truth behind the legend.

"Not to belabor the point, but imagine someone walking up and saying to you 'you are the son of Luke Skywalker.' There would be this moment of 'No, that's just a story.' And then you find out there is a reality behind that story. So that's the two levels we are dealing with here. The myth and the reality co-exist in the world of this tale."

What's the creative backstory of ***Son of Merlin?*** "Heroes and Villains Entertainment -- *Mikhail Nayfeld, Markus Georg,* and *Dick Hillenbrand*— conjured the premise out of a cauldron one night while listening to Led Zeppelin backwards and *Zid* and I took it from there," Napton joked. "Seriously, they had done a lot of development on this. *Matt Hawkins,* President of Top Cow,and an Arthurian expert in his own right—he crafted his own take on these characters with a comic called ***Lady Pendragon***—had a hankering to work with the Heroes and Villains Guys on this series as a writer, but at the time he was too busy. Since we've known each other going on twenty years, Matt knew I shared a keen interest in the Arthur mythos, so he tapped me to come in and develop it further as the series writer. The Heroes and Villains guys gave me a very full idea, so I just had to do my thing and give birth to it."

Son of Merlin isn't the only comic book series to focus on a modernization of the Arthurian legend. Does Napton see any similarity between this and earlier projects like ***Camelot 3000*** or ***Mage?*** "The 80s gave us those two amazing updates on Arthur, and both are iconic," Napton said. "If I *had* to grab a copy of one from a burning room, I'd grab ***Mage*** first, but both are amazing comic books.

"That said, there's no conscious similarity other than 'how do we make these characters work for *our* time?' which was probably the question *Mike Barr & Brian Bolland* [creators of ***Camelot 3000***] and *Matt Wagner* [creator of ***Mage***] asked themselves and answered in their work. Certain creations are timeless and crave reinvention—and Merlin is one of them. Sherlock Holmes is another -- he is reinvented in every era, decade after decade. Arthur and Merlin are the same.

"The story of the one true king and the wizard are just imbued in our psyche, so people will always come back to them -- always look for ways to make them fresh. Merlin is *JRR Tolkien's* Gandalf. Merlin is *Terry Brooks'* Allanon. Merlin is *George Lucas's* Obi-Wan Kenobi. Merlin is *JK Rowling's* Dumbledore. He is *all* of these men. They are all him. He is a fascinating creation—so in that regard, we owe this series to everything that has come before and add another page to his extensive biography -- because I like to think he's the same dude in every story just taking on a different guise."

Son of Merlin is a limited series, but does the five-issue story leave room for further tales if the series does well? "It's a self-contained story, so if you read all of these five issues you will reach a conclusion to the tale, but the door is left wide open for more," Napton said, "and I hope we get that opportunity to come back, because I'd love to regroup with this team and tell more tales. There's a lot left untapped in this series. This is the appetizer so to speak -- the entree and dessert are in the offing."

Son of Merlin is one of those projects that seems to find just the right blend of story and visuals; who's the artist of the book, and what's his background? "*Zid* is the artist's name and he is *amazing,*" Napton said enthusiastically. "When you are paired with the right artist and you write a description of a comic book page and the page comes back looking amazing, it's like Christmas every time, but with Zid it's like Christmas, New Year's, your birthday —his pages are just absolutely breath taking and work so perfectly with this story. It sounds pretentious, but to pull this story off it needs a certain *gravitas,* and *Zid* gives this story the gravitas it needs. He's a great painter, a great storyteller from a layout perspective and Top Cow should pat themselves on the back for bringing his work to the fore.

"He's an international artist who has worked in Europe, but I think this is his first big showcase in the U.S. Top Cow has proven their commitment to discovering and showcasing new artistic talent time and time again, so it's not a surprise they found this gem in *Zid* and it's been great working with him... just wait and see what he does in the later issues -- beautiful work.!"

Son of Merlin marks a return to Top cow for Napton, who previously wrote ***Myth Warriors*** with *Matt Hawkins.* His recent output has primarily appeared under the Dynamite imprint, where he continues to work on several projects. "I'm currently the monthly writer on ***Dejah Thoris*** and did two other Mars-themed miniseries—***Warriors of Mars*** and a prequel, ***Fall of Barsoom***—as well as a reboot of *Frank Frazetta's* ***Thun'da,*** a creator series called ***Blackbeard,*** and ***Battlestar: Galactica—Adama*** to name a few. I enjoy what Dynamite does as a company and *Nick Barrucci* and *Joe Rybandt* [Dynamite's publisher and editor, respectively] are friends, so it's good times whenever I do a project with them."

Top Cow is so confident that readers who try ***Son of Merlin #1*** are going to be hooked that they're offering the first issue at the bargain price of $1 to make it easy for readers to sample the series. "I hope everyone will take a moment to check out this book," Napton said, "and I hope it brings those amazing iconic mythological characters into our time in a bold, fresh and compelling way for the reader, as that was our aim."

Son of Merlin #1, a $1 comic by *Robert Napton & Zid,* is scheduled for February 6th release from Top Cow.

by Cliff Biggers

Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

COMIC SHOP NEWSARAMA

Produced by *Comic Shop News* in cooperation with *newsarama.com*

Texas Flagged as Most Ordered Justice League of America Variant

DC has released a list of ***Justice League of America*** state-flag variants, ranging from most-ordered (Texas) to least-ordered (Wyoming). Here's the state-by-state (plus a territory and a district) list:

1. Texas
2. California
3. New York
4. Puerto Rico
5. Ohio
6. New Jersey
7. Pennsylvania
8. Michigan
9. Illinois
10. North Carolina
11. Florida
12. Virginia
13. Massachusetts
14. Washington
15. Tennessee
16. Indiana
17. Maryland
18. Alabama
19. Washington, D.C.
20. Hawaii
21. Arizona
22. Wisconsin
23. Colorado
24. Kentucky
25. Minnesota
26. Georgia
27. Oklahoma
28. Iowa
29. New Hampshire
30. Alaska
31. Missouri
32. Connecticut
33. South Carolina
34. New Mexico
35. Nebraska
36. Louisiana
37. Oregon
38. Rhode Island
39. Maine
40. Arkansas
41. Kansas
42. Delaware
43. West Virginia
44. Nevada
45. Mississippi
46. Utah
47. Montana
48. Idaho
49. North Dakota
50. South Dakota
51. Vermont
52. Wyoming

"What better way to show your state pride than by reserving a copy now of ***Justice League of America #1*** that features your very own state's flag?" said *Bob Wayne*, DC Entertainment Senior Vice President of Sales. "Not only that, but you get the first issue of what's sure to be an epic, ongoing series by *Geoff Johns and David Finch* – sounds like a win-win to me. And as a native Texan, I'm not at all surprised to see that Texas is currently #1!"

Of course, it's not too late to boost your state's standing by reserving copies with your friendly neighborhood comic shop,which might necessitate the shop ordering more copies! (Or you can take the completist approach and order the bargain-priced boxed set with all 52 state-flag covers *plus* the standard cover for a bargain price! Check with your local comic shop for more details!)

The Buck Starts Here!

A few weeks ago, *CSN* told you about Aspen's upcoming "Ten for Ten" promotion, in which the publisher would offer ten different first issues—one a month for ten months—for only $1 each, making it easy and affordable for readers to sample all ten. Now we can tell you what the titles involved in the Ten for Ten promotion are and when you can look for them:

- February: ***Legend of the Shadow Clan*** (new series)
- March :***Shrugged Volume 2***
- April: ***Jirni*** (new series)
- May: ***Charismagic Volume 2***
- June: ***BubbleGun*** (new series)
- July: ***All New Fathom***
- August :***Awaken Skies/Overtaken*** (new series)
- September: ***Executive Assistant Iris Volume 4***
- October: ***Trish Out of Water*** (new series)
- November: ***All New Soulfire***

That's a mix of five all-new series and five returning titles. One interesting twist regarding the August release: Aspen will offer either ***Overtaken*** or ***Awaken Skies;*** they will release more details in the next few months and allow readers to vote on which one they want to see in print.

Following the trend towards "pullbox variant" covers, Aspen is creating their own "Reserved Edition" variant covers, which are intended for those who preorder the books at their friendly neighborhood comic shop. And as an added incentive, Aspen will offer a free limited edition "Perfect Tens" poster for those who pick up all ten "Reserved Editions."

THUNDER Resounds at IDW

The series that began as the flagship title of the Tower Comics line in the Silver Age has found a new home: ***THUNDER Agents*** is joining the IDW lineup in 2013.

First published in 1965, the fan-favorite ***THUNDER Agents*** have seen their exploits published by Tower, JC, Deluxe, and DC Comics; during that time, ***THUNDER Agents*** has been written and drawn by a virtual who's-who of comic industry titans. The diverse cast of Agents have seen their share of adventures over the years—including DC's well-received run most recently—but IDW is excited at the opportunity to put their stamp on the legendary team.

"I'm thrilled that IDW will be bringing its extraordinary talents and craft to producing everything from beautiful omnibus volumes to bold and cutting-edge new comic book titles based on T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents," said *Michael Uslan*, who initiated the project. "With top quality, IDW will be presenting the works of comic book super-stars, including ***THUNDER Agents*** creator, *Wally Wood* (***Daredevil, MAD,*** EC horror and science fiction comics, ***All-Star Comics, Power Girl***) along with the legendary *Steve Ditko* (***Amazing Spider-Man,*** Dr. Strange in ***Strange Tales***); *Gil Kane* (***Green Lantern, The Atom***); *Mike Sekowsky* (***Justice League***); *Reed Crandall* (***Blackhawk***); *Dave Cockrum* (***X-Men***); *George Pérez* (***Wonder Woman, New Teen Titans***); *Murphy Anderson* (***Hawkman, The Spectre***); *Paul Gulacy* (***Master of Kung Fu***); *Jerry Ordway* (***Shazam, Justice Society***); *Ron Lim* (***Warlock, Silver Surfer***), *Keith Giffen* (***Legion of Super-Heroes, Lobo***); *Dan Adkins* (***Creepy, Dr. Strange***), and many others."

"***THUNDER Agents*** always had a great premise in addition to the list of esteemed creators who worked on the comics—people whose day job was being government-employed superheroes," IDW's Chief Creative Officer/Editor-in-Chief Chris Ryall said. "That premise offers a resonant jumping-off point for some exciting new stories that will add to the great comics already left behind by both Tower and DC's recent run."

"***THUNDER Agents*** is a classic, beloved property," added *Greg Goldstein*, IDW's President and C.O.O.. "Its original stories featured some of the best superhero art of the silver age and it was well ahead of its time in many areas of storytelling. As an example, it was the first mainstream comic book to feature the 'permanent' death of a major character."

In addition to the rights to reprint classic

SPIDER-MAN

BY STAN LEE & LARRY LIEBER

ONSTAGE IN LAS VEGAS...
AT THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT, SPIDER-MAN WILL BURST FREE— AND AVOID BEING TRAMPLED!
ONLY HE'S ACTUALLY UNCONSCIOUS—AND ABOUT TO BECOME A WEBBED PANCAKE!
STAN LEE LARRY LIEBER 12-31
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COMIC SHOP NEWS

Published weekly since 1987 by Comic Shop News, Inc.

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Printed by Transcontinental Interglobe, Beauceville, QC, Canada

THUNDER Agents comics as well as create all-new series around the property, IDW also now controls the rights to fellow Tower Comics titles ***Undersea Agent*** and ***Fight the Enemy***, too.

"We are very excited that ***THUNDER Agents*** has found a new home at IDW," *David M. Matthews*, Managing Director of Radiant Assets (owner of the property) said. "Their history of high-quality publications coupled with top-notch creative teams perfectly complements our desire to expand not only the ***THUNDER Agents*** franchise, but ***Undersea Agent*** and ***Fight the Enemy***, as well. We join them with great optimism about bringing this storied team's past, present and future to a whole new generation of readers, who will join the long-time legion of fans already anxious for the continuation of the team's legendary exploits."

Look for more news on IDW's ***THUNDER Agents*** offerings in upcoming issues of ***CSN***.

CSNsider

•*Drew Hayes'* ***Poison Elves*** is returning in March from Ape Entertainment with creators *Robb Horan & Osvald Pestana Montpeller* continuing the saga that the late *Drew Hayes* began years ago. To make sure that the book isn't lost on the racks the publisher has enlisted some pretty high profile creators to join the party for the fantasy series' return, including fan favorites *Darick Robertson* and *Terry Moore*.

•*Joe Benitez's* ***Lady Mechanika*** may have appeared all too infrequently, but when it *does* appear, the book has been universally praised for both its engaging storytelling and its stunning artwork. The book has been one of the strongest sellers for Aspen Comics—but that's about to change, as Aspen and Benitez have announced an amicable separation. Aspen's *Peter Steigerwald* said that "we have greatly appreciated Joe's time here with us and his involvement and promotion of Aspen Comics over the years. Joe and I have discussed his future plans and his desire to venture out on his own.As many know, ten years ago our Founder, *Michael Turner*, took a similar position and stepped away from his publisher, taking full publishing control of his own creations by founding Aspen Comics. We wish Joe well, and hope for a bright future for him and his creations, including ***Lady Mechanika***..."

"I am both anxious and excited to be venturing out on my own with ***Lady Mechanika***," Benitez said. "Aspen has been very supportive and I am and always will be grateful to them for giving ***Lady Mechanika*** her first home. As I've stated in the past, working with Peter has

been one of the highlights of my career... My plans for ***Lady Mechanika*** include finishing 'The Mystery of the Mechanical Corpse' this upcoming year and also launching a monthly ***Lady Mechanika*** ongoing series."

•*Gerry Anderson*, co-creator of ***Thunderbirds, Fireball XL5, Stingray, Captain Scarlet*** and ***Space: 1999***, among other fondly-remembered projects, passed away in late December at the age of 83. He is beset known for his "super-marionation" technique that made it possible to produce amazingly lifelike stop-motion puppet productions.

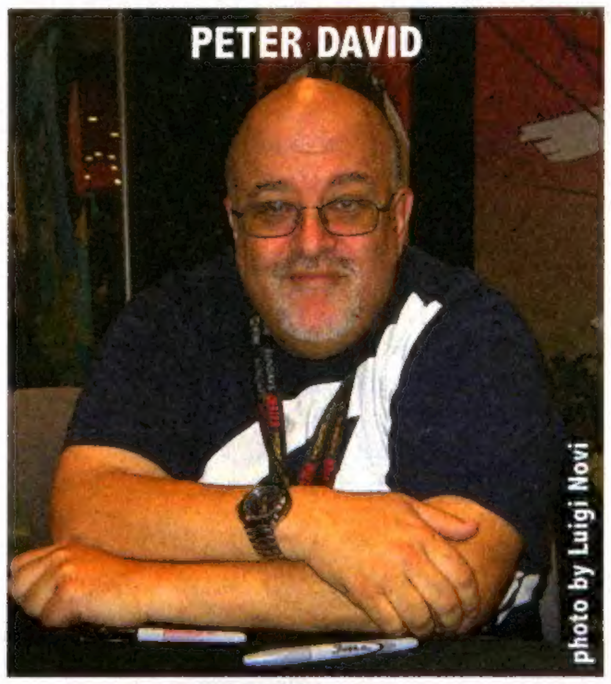
•*Keiji Nakazawa*, creator of the powerful autobiographical ***Barefoot Gen*** (which told the story of his experiences during and after the bombing of Hiroshima, which he experienced first-hand as a child), passed away in mid-December at the age of 73 after suffering from lung cancer for two years. His frank, sometimes horrifying look at the immediate and longer-term effects of the first atomic bomb made ***Barefoot Gen*** and the oneshot comic ***I Saw It*** some of the most moving and memorable comics ever published in any language or format.

•Fan-favorite writer *Peter David* suffered a stroke on Sunday, December 30th; the first word of the stroke was shared by *Peter David* himself on his blog at peterdavid.net, but subsequent reports have been shared with his many friends, colleagues, and fans by his wife Kathleen. She reported on her blog at kathwp.malibulist.com that "he has lost most of the use of his right arm, his right leg is incredibly weak, the vision in his right eye is blurry, and the right side of his face is drooping slightly. But the brain is there with all its quips and quick retorts. He has had the nurses laughing a lot."

Kathleen went on to explain that Peter has a stint in rehab ahead of him, although he is trying to maintain as much normalcy in his life as possible; she added that "he revised an ***X-Factor*** script for his editor at Marvel, which I think made him feel good/more normal than he has been feeling."

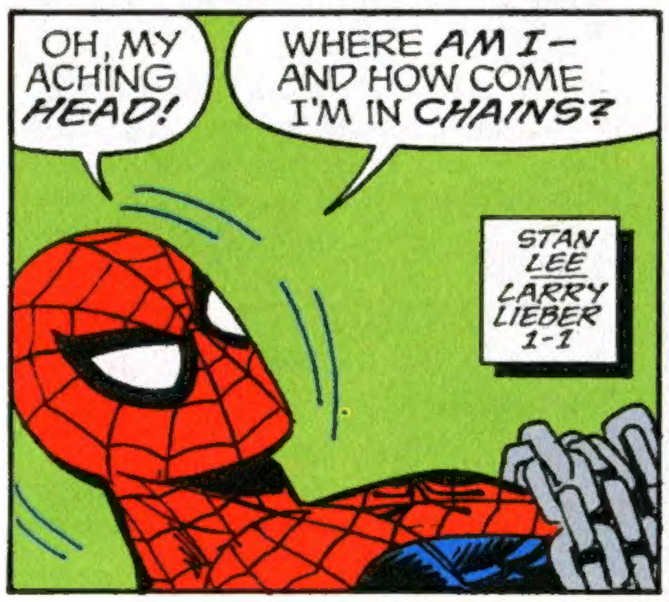
She explained that "Peter is doing better every day... Peter says it is both gratifying and humbling about the number of people who are praying for them and keeping him in their thoughts and he appreciates and is thankful to each and every one of you."

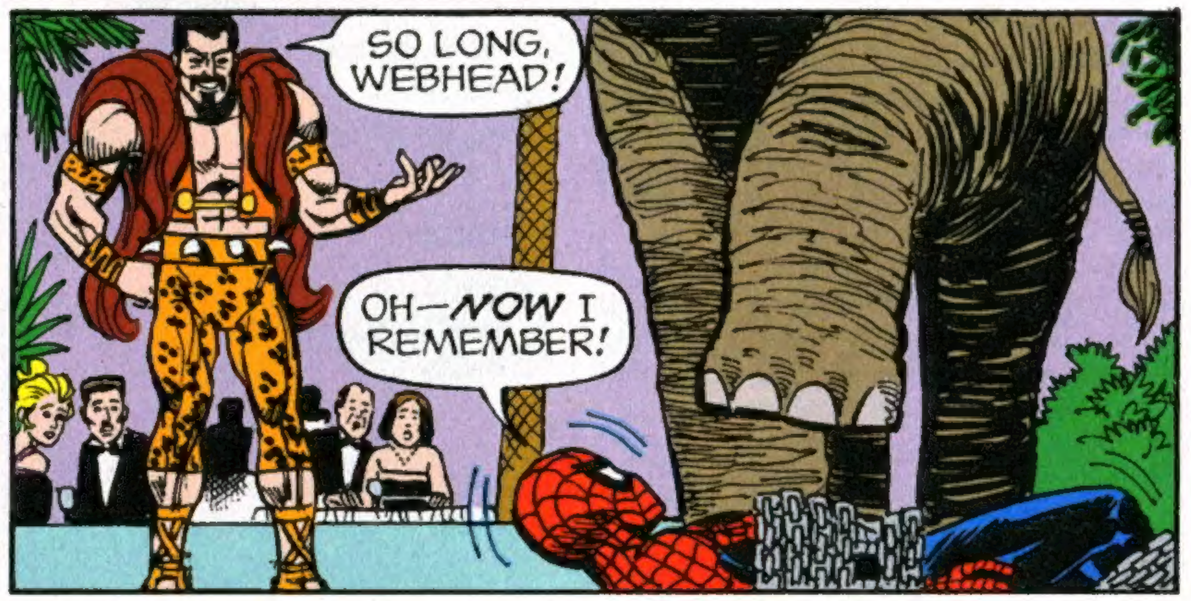
Both *Ward Batty* and *Cliff Biggers* of ***CSN*** have counted Peter among our friends even before we ever launched ***CSN***, and we join everyone else in hoping for as rapid and complete a recovery as possible—and knowing Peter, he won't settle for anything less!



•Ever since Disney's acquisition of ***Star Wars*** was announced, fans have wondered what that meant for the future of Dark Horse's ***Star Wars*** comics license. The Disney-centric blog Blue Sky Disney has reported that what many suspected will indeed come to pass: Dark Horse will reportedly lose the license when it expires after 2013, and Marvel will once again publish ***Star Wars*** comics at the same time ***Star Wars Episode 7*** premieres in 2015. (Marvel was the original comic book home for ***Star Wars***, publishing more than 100 issues before losing the license.) Between now and then, however, fans can look forward to more great ***Star Wars*** projects from Dark Horse, including many more issues of the *Brian Wood* written ***Star Wars*** series that debuted earlier this month.

•*Michael Allred* is taking a one-month break in February, so *Chynna Clugston-Flores* (***Blue Monday***) is teaming up with series writer *Jamie S. Rich* for ***It Girl and the Atomics #6***, a standalone issue focusing on a fan-favorite character




SO LONG, WEBHEAD!
OH—NOW I REMEMBER!
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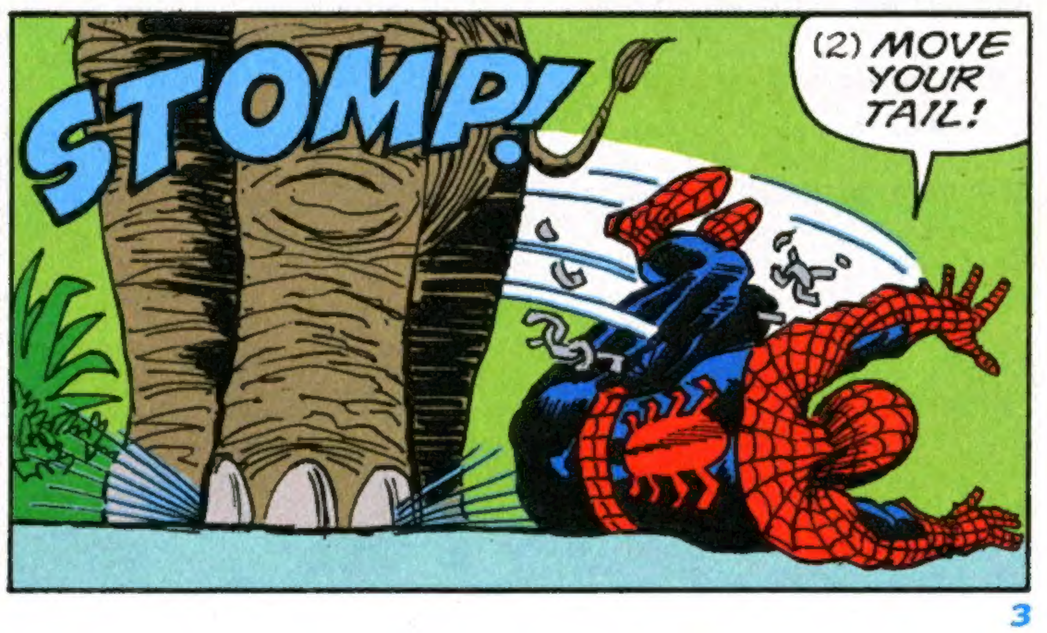


from the *Madman* universe, Mr. Gum—a former beatnik who developed super-elasticity after being exposed to an alien spore.

"Mr. Gum was probably the character I was most sad not having as a regular in ***It Girl and the Atomics***," Rich said. "He's your typical fast-talking, wise-cracking rubber man, and I've always thought he was a blast... When I was casting about for someone to have pop in for fill-in issues, Chynna was just a natural choice—particularly for Mr. Gum. The three of us have a shared sense of humor: me, Chynna, and Gum."

"I was very excited to get a chance to draw an entire comic dedicated to Mr. Gum, a personal favorite," Clugston-Flores said, "as well as to collaborate with Jamie after so long! Jamie's right about our sense of humor, and Mr. Gum certainly personifies it when he's at his worst—or rather, most amusing, in my opinion!"

It Girl & the Atomics #6 is slated for release this week.

•Back in December, Image announced plans to cut back on reprints of popular sold-out titles to encourage stronger initial orders; after an outpouring of disappointment and concern from retailers and readers alike, Image publisher *Eric Stephenson* modified the policy, announcing that the publisher *would* go back to press on sellout books like ***Saga #7.*** Now Image will go back to press "when circumstances dictate that something needs to be reprinted to meet demand." However, the company will not "reprint everything as a matter of course." As an example, he indicated that the average issue of ***Walking Dead*** would *not* go back to press, while instant sellout first issues would more likely see additional printings. Image also has recently relaunched its possible Image Firsts line of affordably-priced $1 premiere issues of such popular series as ***Saga, Walking Dead,*** and ***Thief of Thieves.***

Back to Press

•***Adventure Time: Fionna & Cake #1 2nd Printing*** (NOV128197), in stores 2/13.
•***All New X-Men #3 2nd Printing*** (NOV128053), in stores 1/30.
•***All New X-Men #4 2nd Printing*** (NOV128099), featuring a variant cover by *Stuart Immonen,* in stores 1/30.
•***All New X-Men #5 2nd Printing*** (NOV128180), featuring a variant cover by *Stuart Immonen,* in stores 2/6.
•***Amazing Spider-Man #698 3rd Printing*** (NOV128140), featuring a variant cover by *Paolo Rivera,* in stores 1/30.
•***Amazing Spider-Man #699.1 2nd Printing*** (NOV128064), in stores 1/30.
•***Amazing Spider-Man #700 2nd Printing*** (NOV128135), featuring a variant cover by *Humberto Ramos,* in stores 1/30.
•***Avengers #2 2nd Printing*** (NOV128141), featuring a variant cover by *Dustin Weaver,* in stores 1/30.
•***Avenging Spider-Man #15.1 2nd Printing*** (NOV128017), in stores 1/30.
•***Borderland Origins #1 2nd Printing*** (NOV128011), in stores this week.
•***Daredevil #21 2nd Printing*** (NOV128142), featuring a variant cover by *Paolo Rivera,* in stores 1/30.
•***Deadpool #3 2nd Printing*** (NOV128016), featuring a variant cover by *Geof Darrow,* in stores 1/30.
•***Deathmatch #1 2nd Printing*** (NOV128196), in stores 2/13.
•***Happy #3 2nd Printing*** (NOV128183), in stores 1/30.
•***Hawkeye #5 2nd Printing*** (NOV128015), featuring a variant cover by *David Aja,* in stores 1/30.
•***Hawkeye #6 2nd Printing*** (NOV128181), featuring a variant cover by *David Aja,* in stores 2/6.
•***Hellboy in Hell #1 2nd Printing*** (NOV128168), featuring a variant cover by *Mike Mignola,* in stores 1/30.
•***Iron Man #1 2nd Printing*** (NOV128065), in stores 1/30.
•***Morbius, Living Vampire #1 2nd Printing*** (NOV128185), featuring a variant cover by *Gabriele Dell'Otto,* in stores 2/6.
•***Nowhere Men #2 2nd Printing*** (NOV128153), *in stores 1/30.*
•***Revival #5 2nd Printing*** (NOV128161), in stores 1/30.
•***Saga #7 2nd Printing*** (NOV128073), in stores this week.
•***Superior Spider-Man #1 2nd Printing*** (NOV128184), featuring a variant cover by *Ryan Stegman,* in stores 2/6.
•***Thor, God of Thunder #3 2nd Printing*** (NOV128143), featuring a variant cover by *Esad Ribic,* in stores 1/30.
•***Thunderbolts #1*** (NOV128052), in stores 1/30.
•***Thunderbolts #2*** (NOV128144), featuring a variant cover by *Steve Dillon,* in stores 1/30.

ACTION COMICS #17

Grant Morrison (W); Rags Morales (A)
(DC DEC120252 $4.99)

What's the Scoop?

Superman fights to save all creation in this extra-sized finale to all the storylines that have intrigued readers since ***Action #1.***

Why Should You Care?

Grant Morrison, one of comics finest writers, brings his run on this flagship title to an end with an extra-sized issue that's sure to be a milestone in the New 52.

FAIRY QUEST #1 (OF 2)

Paul Jenkins (W); Humberto Ramos (A)
(Boom DEC120907 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Welcome to the world of Fablewood, where all of the stories that have ever been told live side-by-side... and the only escape from this sinister place is a mysterious realm called The Real World.

Why Should You Care?

Paul Jenkins & Humberto Ramos launch a new fantasy series tailor-made for fans of ***Fables, Once Upon a Time,*** and ***Grimm.***

FEARLESS DEFENDERS #1 NOW

Cullen Bunn (W); Will Sliney (A)
(Marvel DEC120615 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

Misty Knight and the Valkyrie assemble an all-female team in this 21st century reinvention of the Defenders concept.

CSN TOP C

Why Should You Care?

DC's outstanding ***Birds of Prey*** demonstrates that there's an eager audience for a female-team book done right—and with *Cullen Bunn* involved, we have confidence that ***Fearless Defenders*** will quality!

GARTH ENNIS'S RED TEAM #1

Garth Ennis (W); Craig Cernak (A)
(Dynamite DEC120982 $3.99)

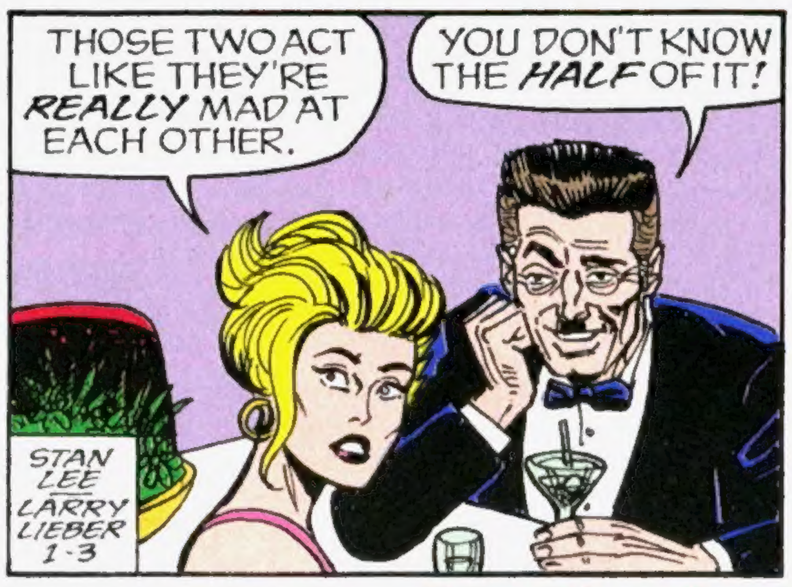
What's the Scoop?

Members of the NYPD's elite anti-narcotics unit cross the line in order to solve a difficult case... and they soon discover that doing the wrong thing can be very, *very* seductive.

Why Should You Care?

Garth Ennis, the master of modern grim 'n' gritty, takes the lead as Dynamite unveils the premiere book in its new Crime Line. And after ***Punisher MAX*** and ***Jennifer Blood,*** is there any doubt that Ennis knows how to do crime drama?

YOU'VE REVIVED? BUT I'D STRUCK YOU WITH MY HARDEST BLOW!
IS THAT WHAT THAT WAS? I THOUGHT A CREAM PUFF FELL ON ME!
NOW I'LL SHOW YOU MY HARDEST BLOW!


THOSE TWO ACT LIKE THEY'RE REALLY MAD AT EACH OTHER.
YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT!
STAN LEE LARRY LIEBER 1-3
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COMICS: FEBRUARY

GUARDIANS OF GALAXY #0.1 NOW

Brian Bendis (W); Steve McNiven

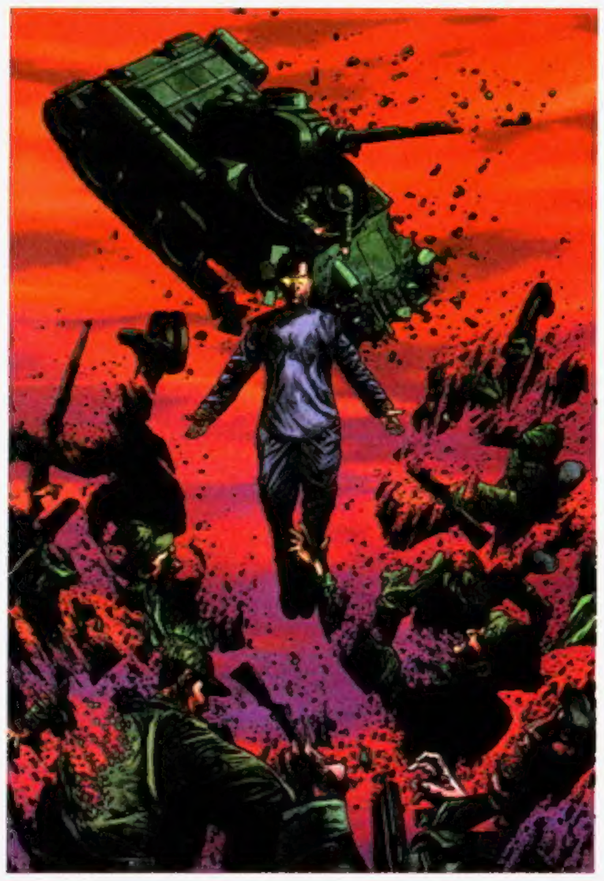
(Marvel DEC120597 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

How did Star-Lord become the leader of one of the rag-taggiest teams in the galaxy... and how in the world did they enlist Iron Man to join their ranks? We're about to find out!

Why Should You Care?

Brian Bendis & Steve McNiven update a spacefaring concept whose roots go back to the end of the Silver Age—but this new team of Star-Lord, Gamora, Drax, Rocket Raccoon, Groot, and Iron Man is nothing like any Guardians you've ever seen before. (And if you need another reason to check this series out, don't forget that there's a ***Guardians of the Galaxy*** film on Marvel's schedule!)



HARBINGER (ONGOING) #0

Joshua Dysart (W); Mico Suayan (A)

(Valiant DEC121260 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Who was Toyo Harada before he became the world's most powerful man? And what are the origins of the Harbinger Foundation? Find out in this pivotal standalone tale that will have ramifications on the future of the Valiant Universe.

Why Should You Care?

2012 was Valiant's establishing year, but 2013 is shaping up as the Year of the Big Picture, and this look into Toyo Harada's formative years is going to play a big part in some of Valiant's upcoming events.

HELLBLAZER #300

Peter Milligan (W); Giuseppe Camuncoli (A)

(Vertigo/DC DEC120364 $4.99)

What's the Scoop?

John Constantine has escaped, cheated, narrowly avoided, and even reversed death on multiple occasions over the past quarter-century. Can he do it one more time?...

Why Should You Care?

Vertigo's longest-running series comes to an end after 300 issues. While we're not saying goodbye to John Constantine (who's soon to star in his own New 52 series), this *is* the end of an era for Vertigo. So don't miss a chance to say farewell to an old friend...

JUSTICE LEAGUE #17

Geoff Johns (W); Ivan Reis (A)

(DC DEC120174 $3.99)

AQUAMAN #17

Geoff Johns (W); Paul Pelletier (A)

(DC DEC120178 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

As "Throne of Atlantis" comes to a dramatic close, Aquaman and the League make a sinister discovery that changes the outcome of the war... and the future of the Justice League. The story continues into ***Aquaman's*** epilogue, in which the secrets of Atlantis are revealed and Aquaman discovers that a myth from Atlantis's past is connected to his own.

Why Should You Care?

Geoff Johns has made Aquaman a major player in the New 52 DCU—and now, in the "Throne of Atlantis" crossover, he's made the undersea kingdom a vitally important part of the New 52 mythos. What ***Fantastic Four Annual #1*** did for Namor and Atlantis in the Marvel Universe, this story arc does for Aquaman and Atlantis in the New 52.

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #1

Geoff Johns (W); David Finch (A)

(DC DEC120183 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

The new Green Lantern, Green Arrow, Catwoman, Katana, Vibe, Hawkman, and Stargirl come together to form a new Justice League. But what is their ultimate mission... and who's pulling the strings?

Why Should You Care?

DC expands the Justice League to a full franchise with the addition of this new ongoing series from creative superstars *Geoff Johns* and *David Finch*. And for those of you who want a little local color in your comics, DC is offering this book with 52 different "state flag" variants!

KATANA #1

Ann Nocenti (W); Alex Sanchez (A)

(DC DEC120238 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?

The former Birds of Prey member embarks on a quest to restore the Outsiders to their former glory. Will she succeed, or will she be overcome by the power of her sword, the Soultaker?

Why Should You Care?

With her own solo series launching the same month she joins the lineup of the new ***Justice League of America,*** Katana's future is looking very bright indeed. And with *Ann Nocenti* writing this series, readers can look forward to strong characterization, lots of action, and clever storytelling designed to dovetail with ***Justice League.***

LEGEND OF THE SHADOWCLAN #1 (OF 5)

David Wohl (W); Cory Smith (A)

(Aspen DEC120840 $1.00)

What's the Scoop?

The Arashi family is just like any other contemporary American family, with one important exception: they're descended from a clan of feudal ninja who have for generations been the targets of an ancient enemy. And now that enemy has found the latest generation of Arashi, and the family is doomed unless they can rediscover their long-forgotten birthright...

Why Should You Care?

This is the first of ten high-profile $1-first-issue titles that Aspen will offer throughout the year—and with *David Wohl* writing and that bargain pricepoint, how can you go wrong?

MUSE DELUXE HC

Denis Pierre Filippi (W); Terry Dodson (A)

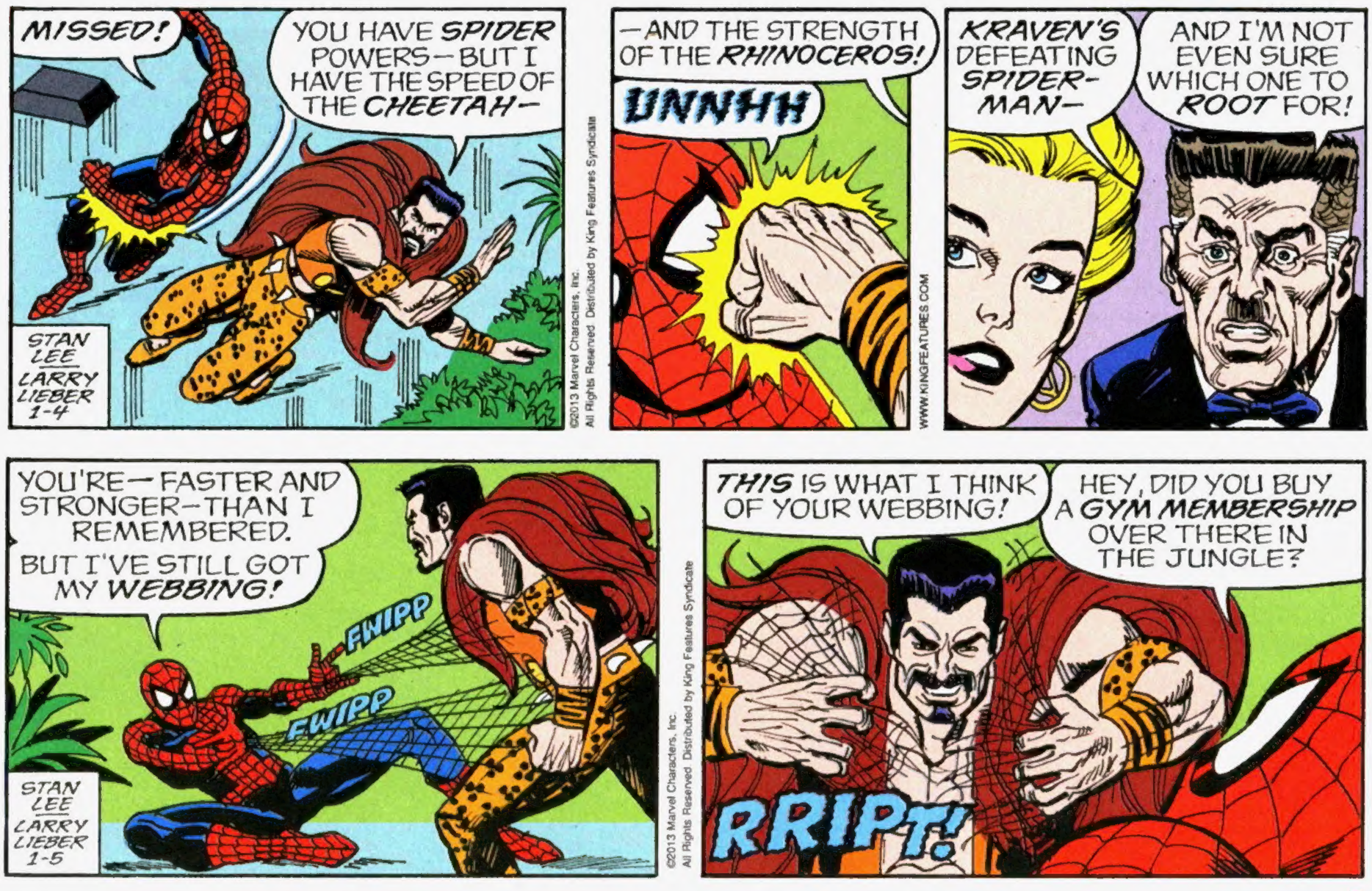
(Humanoids DEC121142 $34.95)

What's the Scoop?

The sensual, dreamy adventures of a beautiful young lady serving as a governess to a mysterious homeowner are the focus of this stunning graphic album.

Why Should You Care?

Muse is *Terry Dodson* at his finest, reminding us once again that few artists are more skilled than he at conveying emotion, beauty, and elegance on paper.


MISSED!
YOU HAVE SPIDER POWERS—BUT I HAVE THE SPEED OF THE CHEETAH—
—AND THE STRENGTH OF THE RHINOCEROS!
UNNHH
KRAVEN'S DEFEATING SPIDER-MAN—
AND I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHICH ONE TO ROOT FOR!
YOU'RE—FASTER AND STRONGER—THAN I REMEMBERED.
BUT I'VE STILL GOT MY WEBBING!
FWIPP
FWIPP
THIS IS WHAT I THINK OF YOUR WEBBING!
HEY, DID YOU BUY A GYM MEMBERSHIP OVER THERE IN THE JUNGLE?
RRIPT!
STAN LEE
LARRY LIEBER
1-4
STAN LEE
LARRY LIEBER
1-5
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MYLO XYLOTO #1

Coldplay & Mark Osborne (W); Alejandro Fuentes (A)

(Bongo DEC120895 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Witness the secret otherworldly narrative behind Coldplay's latest album in this intriguing and complex miniseries.

Why Should You Care?

Perhaps you've heard of Coldplay... they sell lots of albums, ***Mylo Xyloto*** is their most recent release. And there are legions of fans who are going to want a copy of the comic book co-written by Coldplay to complement that album...

NEMO: HEART OF ICE HC

Alan Moore (W); Kevin O'Neill (A)

(Top Shelf DEC121247 $14.95)

What's the Scoop?

Janni Dakkar once tried to escape the legacy of her famous father, but now she's embraced her destiny as the new Nemo, captain of the legendary Nautilus. And now she's determined to succeed where her father failed as she launches on a mission to explore Antarctica, and not even the trio of genius inventors under the direction of Charles Foster Kane can prevent her from completing her quest.

Why Should You Care?

Thought that ***The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*** had come to an end! Think again! Moore and O'Neill are back with a solo tale that we hope are the first of many ***LoEG*** standalone spotlight adventures!

NOVA #1 NOW

Jeph Loeb (W); Ed McGuinness (A)

(Marvel DEC120602 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

How does a small-town teenager become a cosmic hero? That's what Sam Alexander is about to find out... first hand!

Why Should You Care?

Jeph Loeb & Ed McGuinness, creators of multiple fan-favorite projects at both DC and Marvel, propel the new Nova into a high-profile starring role. You're seen him in action in ***Avengers Vs X-Men***—now find out how he became one of the Marvel Universe's mightiest heroes!

SECRET AVENGERS #1 NOW

Nick Spencer (W); Luke Ross (A)

(Marvel DEC120624 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

The new Nick Fury takes the lead with his newly-assembled covert Avengers strike team that includes Hawkeye, Black Widow, the Hulk, Winter Soldier, Maria Hill, Phil Coulson, and other operatives to be named at a later date.

Why Should You Care?

While it may seem like the Marvel Universe is overrun with covert operatives teams who take on the missions that no one else dares to undertake (maybe we could have all of them cross paths in a huge event miniseries!), this is likely to be one of the best—after all, five of its cast members had prominent roles in that little seen ***Avengers*** art film that you might have heard about...

SHADOW: YEAR ONE #1 (OF 8)

Matt Wagner (W); Wilfredo Torres (A)

(Dynamite DEC120984 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

How did the man now known as the Shadow develop his persona as the Master of Darkness? How did he put together a network of agents? When and where did he first meet Margo Lane? Find out in this compelling look at the pulp hero's Shadow-y past.

Why Should You Care?

Matt Wagner, a master storyteller whose love for the Golden Age era has evidenced itself in such projects as ***Sandman Mystery Theatre*** and ***Green Hornet: Year One,*** turns his attention to one of pulpdom's most enigmatic heroes, filling in the blanks on his mysterious beginnings.

SON OF MERLIN #1

Robert Place Napton (W); Zid (A)

(Image DEC120513 $1.00)

What's the Scoop?

A brilliant scientist discovers that he is the bastard son of the world's greatest wizard Merlin—and now he has to make room for both science and magic in a life that once seemed so predictable and logical...

Why Should You Care?

Robert Place Napton, best known for his fast-paced adventure tales in the pages of Dynamite's ***Thun'da*** and ***Warlord of Mars,*** really shines in this new creator-owned series from Image—and he has so much confidence you're going to like it that he's offering the first issue for the bargain price of $1!

SUPERIOR SPIDER-MAN #3 NOW

Dan Slott (W); Ryan Stegman (A)

(Marvel DEC120662 $3.99)

SUPERIOR SPIDER-MAN #4 NOW

Dan Slott (W); Giuseppe Camuncoli (A)

(Marvel DEC120664 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

The new Peter Parktopus adapts to his role as the Superior Spider-Man, which means that some changes are in store. What's his new relationship with J. Jonah Jameson? Is his still committed to Peter Parker's old promises? And how will he deal with veteran rogues like the Vulture?

Why Should You Care?

Dan Slott has shaken up the whole Spidey status-quo in a way no one foresaw—but everyone wants to see where he's going next!

UNCANNY X-MEN #1 NOW

Brian Bendis (W); Chris Bachalo (A)

(Marvel DEC120608 $3.99)

What's the Scoop?

Are Cyclops and his team of X-Men visionary revolutionaries or dangerous terrorists? Hard to say—but Cyke, along with Emmy Frost, Magneto, and Magik are assembling new mutants to redefine the name "Uncanny X-Men."

Why Should You Care?

In the aftermath of ***Avengers Vs. X-Men,*** Cyclops' role in the Marvel Universe has become much more complex—and few writers handle "complex" better than *Brian Bendis!*

Event of the Month

BATGIRL #17 (DOTF)

Gail Simone (W); Ed Benes (A)

(DC DEC120277 $2.99)

BATMAN #17 (DOTF)

Scott Snyder (W); Greg Capullo (A)

(DC DEC120264 $3.99)

NIGHTWING #17 (DOTF)

Kyle Higgins (W); Juan Jose Ryp (A)

(DC DEC120284 $2.99)

RED HOOD AND THE OUTLAWS #17 (DOTF)

Scott Lobdell (W); Timothy Green (A)

(DC DEC120283 $2.99)

The Joker's brutal plan to eliminate the "distractions" in Batman's life comes to a startling conclusion in ***Batman #17,*** but the story doesn't end there. The mayhem left in the Joker's wake isn't easily forgotten, as Barbara Gordon, Dick Grayson, and Jason Todd know all too well... "Death of the Family" has been a Joker story unlike anything readers have seen before, and the ramifications of such a horrifying plan will reshape the lives of all who survive.

FYI: A Must-Have Addition to Your Reference Library

AL CAPP: LIFE TO THE CONTRARY HC

(Bloomsbury DEC121347 $30.00)

One of the few comics artists who became a celebrity in his own right, Al Capp is much more complex than many realize, as *Michael Schumacher & Denis Kitchen* reveal in this meticulously researched biography.

ALTER EGO #115

(TwoMorrows NOV121432 $8.95)

If you're spotlighting 3D, you *gotta* inclue 3D content, right? So *Roy Thomas* has enlisted *Ray Zone* to look at the history of 3D comics, along with select reprints of 3D art by Simon & Kirby, Kubert, Meskin, Swan, Boring, and many others—and as icing on the 3D cake, Roy's thrown in a free pair of red-and-green glasses!

FEMINISM IN THE WORLDS OF NEIL GAIMAN SC

(McFarland DEC121391 $35.000

This new collection of sixteen essays looks at the feminist themes in *Neil Gaiman's* comics and prose. Scholarly, but nevertheless fascinating reading...

ROY G KRENKEL'S DRAWINGS OF WOMEN HC

(Vanguard OCT121244 $39.95)

This collection of unforgettable images by the incomparable *Roy G. Krenkel* makes it clear why he's such an influence on artists like *Frank Frazetta, Bernie Wrightson, Al Williamson,* and *Michael Wm. Kaluta.* Krenkel produced thousands of illustrations in his lifetime, and *David Spurlock* has assembled some of the most striking in this spotlight volume.

Hot Commodities: February's Hottest Merchandising & Collectibles

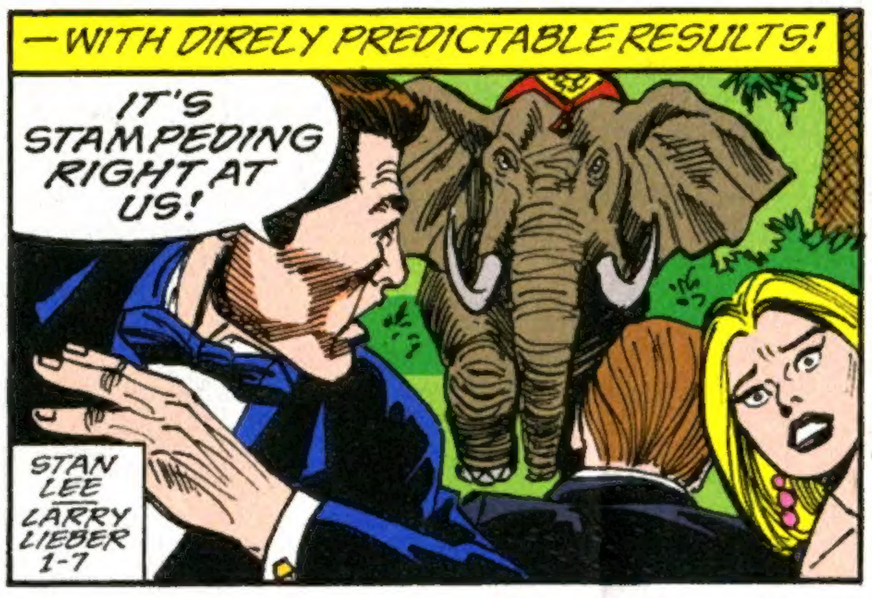
DC BATMAN AUTOMOBILIA FIGURE COLLECTORS MAGAZINE #1: 1989 BATMAN MOVIE

(Eaglemoss NOV121428 $20.00)

DC BATMAN AUTOMOBILIA FIGURE COLLECTORS MAGAZINE #2: 1966 BATMAN TV SERIES

(Eaglemoss NOV121429 $20.00)

Eaglemoss, the company responsible for those so-detailed-they're-almost-tiny-statues lead figures of Marvel and DC heroes, turns their attention to one of the most famous vehicles in comic book history. The Batmobile die-cast metal vehicles line kicks off with the 1989 *Tim Burton* film version and the iconic 1966 *Adam West-Burt Ward* TV series Batmobile.



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VERTIGO COVER GIRLS DEATH STATUE

(DC Collectibles NOV120314 $99.95)

DC has produced plenty of DCU Cover Girls statues over the years, but this striking *Jack Mathews* sculpt of *Neil Gaiman's* famous creation marks the first time a Vertigo character has been spotlighted in the ***Cover Girls*** line. You may as well go ahead and pick it up—after all, you only live once!...

Collected Cool: February's Best Reprint Editions

ADVENTURES OF SUPERHERO GIRL HC

(Dark Horse OCT120042 $16.99)

Faith Erin Nicks' charming strip chronicling the trials and tribulations of a young female hero focuses on both the magnificent and the mundane side of the superheroic life.

AVENGERS VS THANOS TP

(Marvel NOV120791 $34.99)

Since everyone's going to want to know all about Thanos by the time the next ***Avengers*** movie comes along, Marvels' getting ahead of the curve with this collection of classic confrontations from ***Iron Man, Captain Marvel, Daredevil. Marvel Feature, Warlock, Avengers,*** and more.

BATMAN HC: THE NIGHT OF THE OWLS

(DC OCT120247 $29.99)

This hefty volume collects the entire crossover story event from ***Batman #s 8-9, Batman Annual #1, Detective #9, Batman: The Dark Knight #9, Batwing #9, Batman & Robin #9, Red Hood #9, Birds of Prey #9, Batgirl #9, Nightwing #s 8-9,*** and ***All-Star Western #9.***

CAPTAIN AMERICA: DEATH OF CAPTAIN AMERICA ULTIMATE COLLECTION TP

(Marvel NOV120786 $39.99)

Think of it as a paperback ***Omnibus:*** this hefty compendium collects the entire story arc from ***Captain America #s 22-42*** and ***Winter Soldier: Winter Kills.***

DANIEL CLOWES READER SC

(Fantagraphics DEC121116 $29.99)

This landmark collection features ten of Clowes' most influential stories, along with interviews in which he talks about the creative process and twelve thought-provoking essays by contemporary scholars and critics.

IRON MAN BY MICHELINIE, LAYTON, & JRJR OMNIBUS HC VOL 1

(Marvel SEP120679 $99.99)

Marvel's latest Omnibus collects the 1970s run from ***Iron Man #s 115-157,*** including Tony Stark's first bout with alcoholism.

LUMINOUS INCAL DELUXE HC

(Humanoids DEC121141 $79.95)

The second volume of ***The Incal,*** the best-selling international comic masterpiece by *Moebius* and *Alejandro Jodorowsky,* focuses on John DiFool's journey to discover the secrets oft he Incal artifacts.

MICHAEL GOLDEN'S GI JOE ARTIST EDITION PORTFOLIO TP

(IDW NOV120380 $59.99)

Not quite a book, this original-art-sized hardcover portfolio reprints the entirety of ***GI Joe Yearbook #2,*** spotlighting *Michael Golden's* striking art in an affordable upscale edition.

SHOWCASE PRESENTS SGT ROCK TP VOL 4

(DC NOV120267 $19.99)

This hefty 500+ page black-and-white compendium collects the *Robert Kanigher/Joe Kubert* Sgt. Rock tales from ***Our Army at War #s 181-216.***

SUPERMAN VS SHAZAM TP

(DC NOV120273 $19.99)

Re-experience those wonderful Superman-Shazam confrontations from ***All-New Collectors Edition C-58*** and ***DC Comics Presents #s 33-34, 49, & Annual #3.***

SUPERMAN: FOR TOMORROW TP

(DC NOV120270 $24.99)

At long last, DC has collected the entire *Brian Azzarello/Jim Lee* saga from ***Superman #s 204-215*** in a single volume.

TEEN TITANS OMNIBUS BY GEOFF JOHNS HC

(DC SEP120242 $150.00)

Collecting *Geoff Johns'* entire ***Teen Titans*** run from #s 1/2, 26, 29-46, & 50 and much, much more.

VALIANT MASTERS: NINJAK HC VOL 1—BLACK WATER

(Valiant DEC121275 $24.99)

The 1990s ***Ninjak*** run by *Mark Moretti & Joe Quesada* is collected, along with rarely seen sketches and process art from the Valiant Archives.

WONDER WOMAN AMAZON PRINCESS ARCHIVES HC VOL 1

(DC JUL120228 $74.99)

The Silver Age Wonder Woman gets her long-deserved due in this full-color reprint of ***Wonder Woman*** #s 98-110, the first DC issues by *Robert Kanigher, Ross Andru, & Mike Esposito.*

X-FORCE OMNIBUS HC VOL 1

(Marvel SEP120677 $99.99)

Rob Liefeld's work from ***New Mutants #s 98-100, X-Force #s 1-15,*** and more is compiled in a massive hardcover that reminds us of just how innovative Liefeld's Marvel work was—and why he became a '90s comics superstar!

Check 'Em Out: Comics You Should Be Reading!

BATTLEFIELDS #4 (OF 6): FALL & RISE OF ANNA KHARKOVA PART 1

(Dynamite DEC121047 $3.99)

Garth Ennis & Russell Braun chronicle Anna Kharkova's struggles after her aircraft is shot down behind German lines in the second story arc of Ennis's superlative ***Battlefields*** series of powerful real-world war tales.

DARK HORSE PRESENTS #21

(Dark Horse DEC120056 $7.99)

Neil Gaiman & Paul Chadwick teaming up for "The Day the Saucers Came"? That's all the reason you need to add this to the should-read list!

HELLRAISER: DARK WATCH #1

(Boom DEC120913 $3.99)

Clive Barker, Brandon Seifert, Tom Garcia, & Janusz Ordon launch the new era of Hellraiser set in a world in which the Cenobites and their order are no longer hidden.

KILL SHAKESPEARE: TIDE OF BLOOD #1 (OF 5)

(IDW DEC120475 $3.99)

With Richard III and Lady Macbeth defeated, Hamlet, Juliet, Othello and Romeo face an even greater danger-Prospero, a rogue wizard who plans to destroy all of creation. It's up to Hamlet to save the day... if he can just decide on a course of action!

X-O MANOWAR (ONGOING) #10

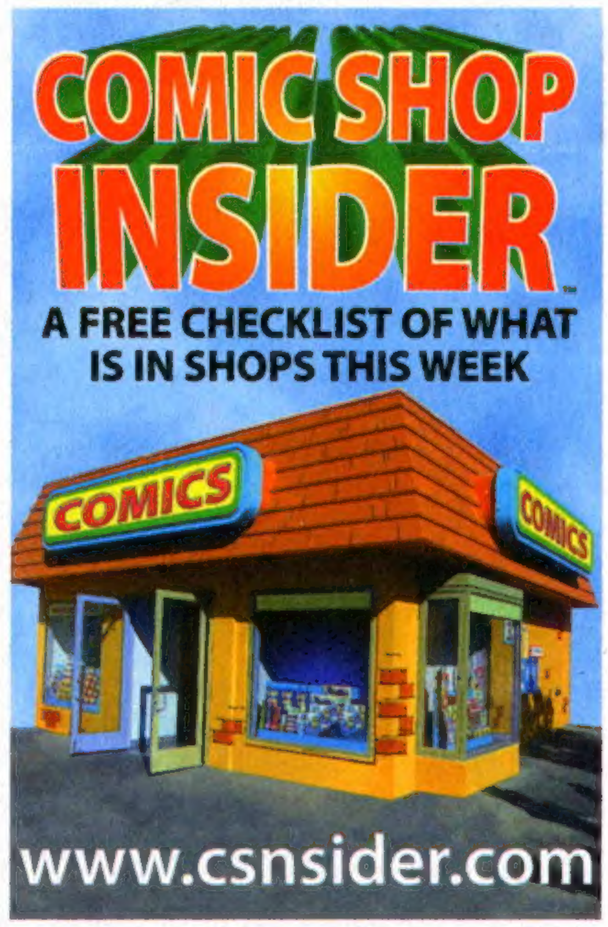
(Valiant DEC121266 $3.99)

Robert Venditti & Trevor Hairsine continue the Planet Death prelude as Aric of Dacia prepares to take the fight to the Vine homeworld... if he can survive a confrontation with an adversary who wants Aric dead. And his only hope survival may lie in the previously-untapped destructive potential of the armor that Aric wears... a potential far more horrific than its wearer ever imagined.

YOUNG ROMANCE: NEW 52 VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIAL #1

(DC DEC120313 $7.99)

Hoorah! The holiday anthology returns with this collection of romantic tales starring Wonder Woman, Superman, Barbara Gordon, Catwoman, Stormwatch, Batman, and others



—EVEN IF THAT MEANS LETTING KRAVEN ESCAPE—WITH THE REAL ABBY TIARA!
STAN LEE
LARRY LIEBER
1-8
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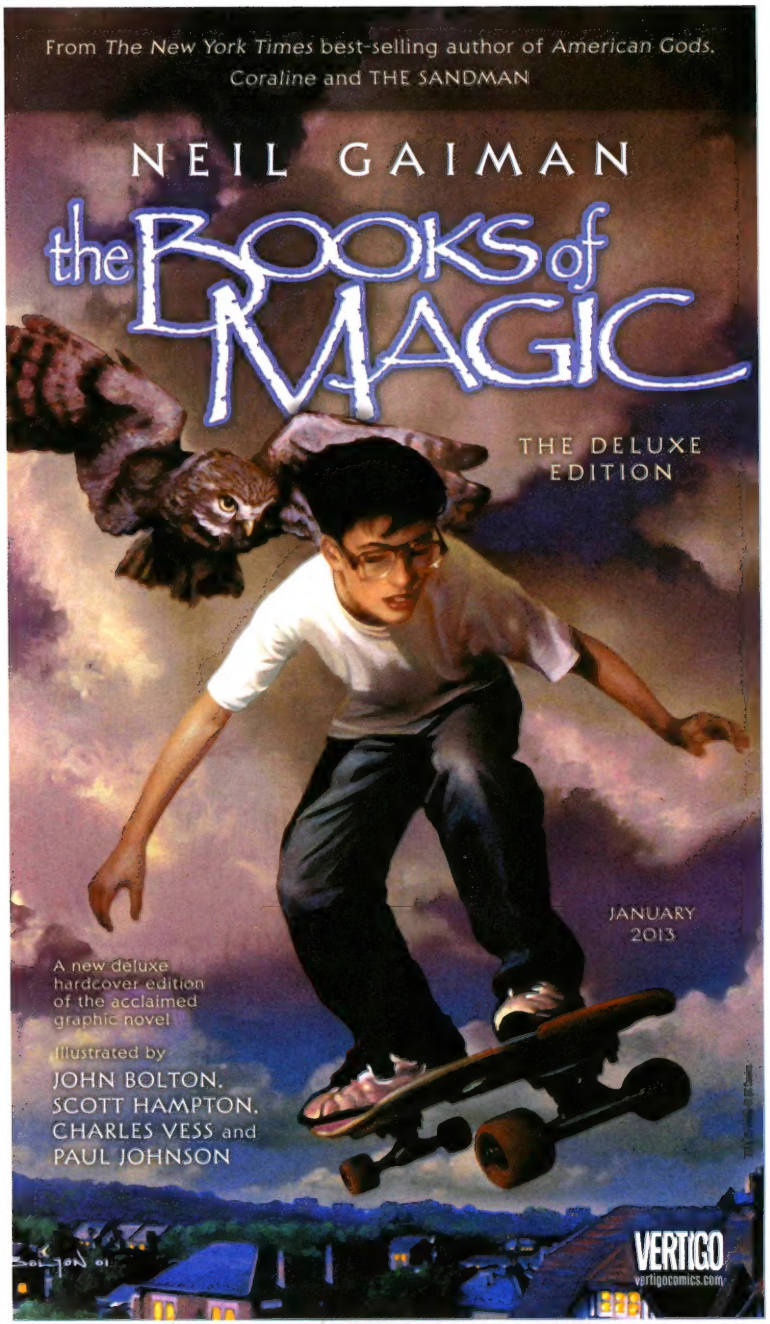
From The New York Times best-selling author of American Gods, Coraline and THE SANDMAN
NEIL GAIMAN
the BOOKS of MAGIC
THE DELUXE EDITION
JANUARY 2013
A new deluxe hardcover edition of the acclaimed graphic novel
Illustrated by JOHN BOLTON, SCOTT HAMPTON, CHARLES VESS and PAUL JOHNSON
VERTIGO
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